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HEADQUARTERS
MILITARY ASSISTANCE ADVISORY GROUP, VIETNAM
APO 143, San Francisco, California

MACA-OT (CB)

SUBJECT

Lessons Learned, 24 [47].

11 13 Nov 62

12 3p.

TO: See Distribution

1. Attached for your information are the latest Lessons Learned from Counter-Insurgency Operations in South Vietnam.

2. The information contained in Lessons Learned is primarily intended for use by U.S. Advisors in Vietnam. They may be of value for direct application or simply to reinforce existing tactics, techniques and doctrine based on the combat experiences in South Vietnam.

3. Comments, questions and/or requests for changes in distribution of Lessons Learned should be addressed to this headquarters, ATTN: O&T Division, USASIG.

FOR THE CHIEF.

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as

s/t DAVID PERSON
Lt Col, AGC
Adjutant General

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U.S. ARMY SECTION
MILITARY ASSISTANCE ADVISORY GROUP
APC 143, San Francisco, California

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MAGAT-OT (S&A)

13 November 1962

SUBJECT: Lessons Learned Number 24

TO: See Distribution

1. (K) GENERAL: ^{report} This deals with an airmobile raid against VC forces known to be numerically superior to the raiding forces. Surprise, deception and firepower differential afforded by close air support were relied upon to achieve the desired results.

2. (K) PARTICIPATING UNITS: The 10th Special Battalion (Banger), special Vietnamese raiding units, 27 strike and transport aircraft, 2 US Army fixed wing aircraft, 10 AVIAF and 13 US Army helicopters all operated under control of I Corps Headquarters. There were 126 AF supporting sorties flown plus 64 US Army aircraft/helicopter sorties.

3. (K) ^{THE} MISSION ^{was to} destroy a VC battalion CP, kill or capture other VC in the area, and destroy any supplies which were found.

4. (K) CONCEPT OF THE OPERATION: A two lift airmobile raid following pre-assault airstrikes, to seize assigned objectives which were believed to include the VC installation noted in the mission. Security and deception measures included late movement to the staging areas and dummy parachute drops in the general vicinity of the operational area. Air cover for both the helicopter movement and ground operation was provided throughout the operation. Upon completion of the mission, and on order, the raiders were to be withdrawn by helicopters under air cover followed by air attack of specific targets in the objective area.

5. (K) RESULTS:

a. Friendly losses: 11 KIA, 21 WIA, (including 4 US), 1 MIA. Two UH1 helicopters were shot down by ground fire and were destroyed in place by strike aircraft after the crews were evacuated.

b. Enemy losses: One VC Battalion CP destroyed, 53 KIA, 1 ammo dump, 1 supply warehouse, 10 buildings, and other miscellaneous equipment, also destroyed or captured. (NOTE: One of the VC KIA is believed to have been the Battalion commander.

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MACAR-OT (S&A)

SUBJECT: Lessons Learned Number 24

6. (N) LESSONS LEARNED

a. IN AIRMOBILE OPERATIONS, THERE MUST BE NO TIME LAG BETWEEN NEUTRALIZING FIRES BY STRIKE AIRCRAFT AND LANDING OF HELICOPTERS. During this operation, weather prevented helicopter landings immediately after the pre-assault airstrike. Although a second airstrike was planned to precede the assault landing, coordination and timing were poor and the airstrike was cancelled. This resulted in the helicopters landing 2 hours after the initial airstrike. A VC 30 caliber machine gun sited near one of the LZ's shot down one helicopter and scored hits on many other helicopters landing there. When landing in VC strong-hold areas, LZ's must be neutralized by continuous fire prior to, upon arrival and during the departure of the helicopters. This requires close coordination and control of covering aircraft by the commander. Immediately upon landing, troops must move aggressively to secure the LZ to deny the enemy close range fires on arriving or departing helicopters. By the same token, as helicopters evacuate the raiding force, ground troops must keep the LZ clear of enemy fires until the last possible moment when suppressive fires must be delivered by supporting aircraft.

b. AN AIRBORNE COMMAND POST (ACP) CAN EFFECTIVELY CONTROL RAID TYPE OPERATIONS. During this operation, a VC-22 (Caribou) aircraft was employed as an airborne CP. While in the operational area, it effectively controlled the actions of the raiding forces. However, it was forced to leave the area just prior to the time the mission was completed. Consequently, the decision to withdraw the raiding party was delayed until the ACP had returned and been briefed by radio on the current situation. This delay, and the requirement for revising the withdrawal plan, due to the situation, required the raiding party to remain in the objective area after the mission had been accomplished. During this time the VC reacted to the raid and positioned themselves to deliver heavy fires against helicopters during the withdrawal. When ACP facilities are used, an alternate aircraft with appropriate command elements must be immediately available in the event the primary ACP must leave its station or for any reason is unable to function in its primary role. In this regard, there must be communications gear aboard all ACP aircraft for use by the command representatives which will permit contact with all ground and air elements. A separate radio net must be available for the air representative to contact aircraft in flight as well as the supporting ASOC.

c. SPARE HELICOPTERS SHOULD BE PLANNED FOR AND AVAILABLE. (See also Lesson Nr 4, para 6b). Aircraft attrition in this type operation is high. This is due to both enemy fire and the routine mechanical failures. When an airmobile evacuation is an integral part of the raid plan, spare helicopters are required to meet withdrawal schedules. Since in the withdrawal, a second lift is far more vulnerable than the first, it is desirable that only one lift out be made from any one LZ. This requires that planned numbers of helicopters be available according to the schedule in spite of losses which might occur

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PAGAR-OT (S&A)

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2. AIRMOBILE WITHDRAWAL OPERATIONS REQUIRE DETAILED PLANNING, CLOSE COORDINATION AND RAPID EXECUTION. Airmobile withdrawal operations must be planned in great detail and include provisions for loading (troops must rehearse the loading phases of the withdrawal), primary and alternate routes of withdraw covering fires from aircraft, helicopters or, if possible, artillery, and the more obvious contingencies in each specific situation. One obvious contingency common to all such plans is that weather may preclude the airmobile withdrawal. Alternate plans must be made for foot withdrawal of all or portions of the raiding forces. Coordination of the withdrawal with all active and supporting elements is essential. Poorly coordinated airmobile withdrawals will inevitably result in unnecessary and unacceptable losses. Execution must be timely and once ordered must be done rapidly to hold personnel and material losses to a minimum.

7. (U) The foregoing is for your information and guidance.

s/t E. F. FOGLESTON
Brigadier General, USA
Chief

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3

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